

THE
LIBRARY ASSISTANT
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ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS
(Section of the Library Association)

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The Library Assistant Announcements

A MEETING of assistant librarians in University Libraries was held at Sheffield University on 25th March, and it was resolved to form an organization to be called "The Society of Assistant Librarians in University Libraries."

It was resolved that the objects of the Society should be :

1. Furtherance of co-operation between the assistants in university and special libraries, especially those in the North Midlands and North of England.
2. Discussion of university and special library problems. Practical research is contemplated.

Meetings will probably be arranged about three times a year in various centres, and there will be a subscription of 1s. per annum to cover postage expenses.

All members of University and Special Libraries, being salaried persons engaged in library administration, shall be eligible for enrolment as members.

The hope was expressed that, with an increase in membership, the society may become affiliated to the professional organization. In nowise does the society intend to rival other organizations. It is hoped that a report on practical classification in University Libraries will be compiled. Preliminary reports will be read at the next meeting, which will be held at Leeds University in July. Mr. T. Hutt, Sheffield University Library, has been elected Secretary.

LIVERPOOL CONFERENCE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 15TH JUNE

All members of the A.A.L. section will be aware that at the above meeting the Revised By-laws of the Library Association will be presented for confirmation. Certain of these by-laws are of vital importance to assistants in that they materially affect the continuance of the A.A.L. as a section. The A.A.L. Council earnestly requests every member who can possibly do so to attend the meeting, in order that the voting power of the section may be used to the best advantage of the profession. Please get into touch with your Divisional Secretary immediately for full particulars of the travelling arrangements.

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Any student taking a course who is affected by conscription should, if he so desires, communicate with his tutor, who will make arrangements to postpone the course.

The Divisions

EAST MIDLAND

A MEETING of this Division was held at the Leicestershire County Branch Library, Market Harborough, on 4th May, at which thirty-five members were present.

A Business Meeting was held first, in which it was reported that the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. W. R. M. McClelland, had resigned on his appointment to the staff of the Oxford Public Libraries. Nominations were invited to fill the vacancy, and these should be sent to the Hon. Secretary of the Division not later than 17th June. It was also reported that the Committee are considering the motion put forward at the Second Annual General Meeting, held on 19th January, concerning the provision of greater facilities for the purchase of text-books, but have decided to take no action in the matter until the status of the Association is finally settled. The Hon. Secretary urged members to support the A.A.L. publication, *Recommended books*, by taking out individual subscriptions and, if possible, introducing it into their library service.

In pursuance of the Committee's policy of arranging papers helpful to the younger members in studying for the examinations, an address was given by Mr. T. Maurice Westhead, A.L.A. (County Librarian of Leicestershire), on County Library Work, which was both informative and very interesting. This was followed by an extremely controversial paper by Mr. N. B. Buchanan, F.L.A. (Nottingham Public Libraries), in which the trend of modern reading tastes and the part played by Public Libraries in forming those tastes, were examined. A lively discussion followed each paper.

After tea, as guests of Mr. A. J. Tompkins (County Council Representative for Market Harborough), members went to see Mr. John Fothergill's famous inn, "The Three Swans," and then to the Leicestershire County Library Headquarters for a tour of inspection.

Sincere votes of thanks were extended to the hosts and the speakers for a very enjoyable meeting.

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SOUTH-EASTERN

At the Spring Meeting of the South-Eastern Division held at Brighton on Wednesday, 26th April, Mr. E. Male, Chief Librarian, Brighton, who is to retire shortly, was presented with a typewriter by the members of the Division.

The presentation was made by Mr. Wilfred Hynes, Chairman, who mentioned Mr. Male's connexion with the Division since its foundation twenty-seven years ago, during which time he had been Secretary, Treasurer, and Chairman.

In returning thanks, Mr. Male gave a brief sketch of the conditions under which assistants worked when he began as a junior.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to a series of papers on "Modern Biography" :

Hilaire Belloc, by Mr. L. Cottrill, West Sussex County Library.

Daphne Du Maurier, by Miss D. Tennant, Worthing.

Emil Ludwig, by Miss J. Little, Hove.

André Maurois, by Miss L. Hazell, Hastings.

J. Middleton Murry, by Mr. P. Flint, East Sussex County Library.

Lyton Strachey, by Mr. H. G. Holloway, Eastbourne.

And a covering paper by Miss W. Fox, Worthing.

YORKSHIRE

The Yorkshire Division held a very enjoyable meeting at Rotherham on Wednesday, 22nd March, 1939. Members assembled at the Library, Howard Street, and prior to the meeting had the opportunity of inspecting the various departments of the library. Mr. Boardman, Librarian, had arranged for members to visit Messrs. Guest & Chimes, Ltd., manufacturers of valves and water meters. On arrival at the above works members were grouped in small parties, to each party a guide was attached so as to conduct them throughout the works. The visit proved very interesting, although it did seem strange to see the feminine sex working lathes and small machines. Members were then entertained to tea at a local café by kind invitation of the Libraries Committee. Councillor Mrs. Green, Chairman of the Rotherham Libraries Committee, welcomed members prior to tea being served.

The evening session was devoted to a chairman's address by Mr. R. F. Drewery entitled "Reorganization and youth." Owing to Mr. Drewery

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being indisposed Mr. Sayell read Mr. Drewery's paper. An interesting discussion followed.

The usual votes of thanks were extended to all who had, in any way, assisted in making the meeting a success.

Annotation for the Student¹

R. L. W. COLLISON

ANNOTATION was decidedly easier in the old days: there were few doubts as to its methods and fewer theories concerning its purpose. Either you followed the Croydon-Savage school of thought or you refrained from annotation. To-day, under the brilliant onslaught of Mr. Snaith, annotation contains complexities which can never satisfactorily be solved. Am I being too formal? says the Croydon theorist; am I being too bright? asks the blurb writer. It is, indeed, a dilemma which appears to have no solution, and time cannot clear the difficulty, since it is the ever-recurring struggle between conservative and liberal: both have their points, and there is no middle course which is entirely satisfactory.

Mr. A. T. Austing suggested some time ago that the only answer to the question How does one annotate? is: don't annotate. There is a considerable amount of value in this remark, for annotations certainly tend to date catalogue entries—sometimes in an unpleasant fashion. However, I think it will be generally agreed that the advantages of annotation certainly outweigh its defects, and it is on this assumption that the practice of annotation must rest. What, then, may be said to be the main principles on which the two schools of annotation base their views?

The Croydon-Savage school appears determined to give information which will help the reader to assess the value of a book academically. We are told that the author is Professor of English at Reading, or Chief Engineer at Metro-Vickers: these are the visiting-cards of a man who seeks entrance to an office marked "Private." Are these details of prime importance? May we not assume that the modern library would not add a book on any technical subject without investigating its bona fides? May we not also assume that academic qualifications need not necessarily be any indication of a writer's worth in any philosophic, artistic, or literary subject? May

¹ *A paper read at the Revision School, April 1939.*

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we not assume that such attainments may not guarantee anything more than that the writer represents a certain university or research society school of thought in any historical or economic subject? Does, in fact, a man's academic or technical standing guarantee more than his having received instruction, with which he may or may not agree, and, in fact, which he may have forgotten in part, in the subject on which he is writing? Moreover, does information concerning the author's standing accomplish more than a certain impressiveness which may or may not be warranted, according to the degree of education of the reader? One further point: it is a vastly easy way out of the difficulty of deciding what to put in a thirty-word annotation (in the examination) to devote the first fifteen words to a statement that the author is Associate Professor of Roman Economic History at the University of Ann Arbor.

The rest of the Croydon-Savage practice is on much surer ground, rules are suggested for the annotation of various classes of books, and indications are given of the specific information required by particular subjects. To this we will return later and, in the meantime, consider what I may be forgiven for styling the distinctive method of Bethnal Green.

I think we may safely consider that the Bethnal Green style is that of introduction, evaluation, and enthusiasm. A book has been added to the library; it is assumed to be worth while and everything must be done to encourage as many borrowers as possible to read it. To this end the annotator carefully considers: (a) the specific requirements and interests of borrowers in his locality—thus identifying his practice as regional, in contradistinction to the semi-international aims of the Croydon-Savage school; (b) topical interests which, linked with the contents of the book, may bring pressure to bear on the reader; (c) a certain conscious or subconscious snob-appeal which suggests the borrower should have read the book long ago, or that he will be much improved in mind and body—or, shall we say, better informed—for having done so. The danger is, of course, that of topicality, and the peril of a fashionable annotation's becoming distinctly unfashionable as the years go by is as great as the evil of becoming incomprehensible if the annotation refers too familiarly to events which were in everybody's mind at the time of cataloguing. It may be seen that this method is pre-eminently suited to the bulletin and the booklist rather than to the more permanent form of the catalogue.

It may further be allowed that the Bethnal Green method presents a considerable difference of practice from that of the Croydon-Savage

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School, and that it may often be more successful in securing readers for particular books at the time of their first appearance. But there is a danger that the enthusiastic Bethnal Green annotator may allow some personal bias or some contemporary but not eternal critical standards to recommend books which do not—in the light of more considered opinion—merit such honour.

From these schools of thought certain faults may be drawn which may well be avoided in future annotations and, more especially, in cataloguing examinations. The first is a stiffness of phrasing which may determine the borrower to avoid reading any more annotations. The second is the fatal slickness which tempts the unwary cataloguer to begin every annotation with the words “the author is . . .”—a most depressing way of introducing any interesting book. The third is a topicality whose charms may pall in six months or two years, but whose presence will certainly date any catalogue which cannot be revised more frequently than most libraries can afford.

The style of an annotation is important but is difficult to define: thirty words appear to offer little opportunity for large variations and cunning permutations. Yet Croydon and Bethnal Green, Savage and *Recommended books*, have all shown very convincingly that the impossible has already been accomplished and can be improved upon by perseverance. With thirty words at your command it is essential to avoid all unessentials. The chief unessential is the article, and both definite and indefinite varieties should be cut out, unless their elision will make the sentence ambiguous or meaningless. Mr. Savage gives many examples in his text-book of this kind of abbreviation, and for further practice any good manual of précis writing will be of help. In the same text-book examples are given of other parts of speech which may safely be elided, and it should be recognized that under the influence of Hammett and Hemingway an economic form of speech lends an air of efficiency to the annotation which makes the more garrulous form seem home-made and tasteless. I suggest that the annotation be written out in rough up to a maximum of fifty words and that the cataloguer should then cut out the unnecessary words and reduce it to a well-balanced note of the required size.

For technique in the examination I would offer the following suggestions. At the beginning of the examination choose the four books which you consider will offer you most scope for annotation: the last quarter of an hour does not allow you nearly as much chance of a good selection. As a general rule, you might well assume that highly technical works should

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be avoided, since they allow little scope apart from the "author is . . ." formula. The vaguer type of books—literary, sociological, historical, or contentious—offers more opportunities for distinctive annotation, providing the publisher's blurb is sufficiently detailed.

When you have decided on the four books, proceed with the work of cataloguing the ten prospectuses and, as each of the works to be annotated comes up for consideration of subject heading, underline all parts of the text which supply information which is not given or *implied* in the title. You then have at hand the materials for as good an annotation as can be obtained from the prospectus alone, and by underlining again those points which seem most important you will be able to construct able specimens in the limited time which you can devote to this side of the examination. Before the examination I suggest that you cull from outstanding examples of contemporary annotation about a dozen examples of the opening phraseology—not for blind copying, but as a welcome aid when the dearth of ideas visits you towards the end of six hours' writing. The examples should, of course, be as widely different in style as possible.

Without repeating rules which are in Mr. Savage's text-book, I would suggest certain necessary particulars which vary with the class of book to be handled. For purposes of simplification I have divided them under the Dewey main headings.

Philosophic books require classification into schools of thought, and an indication of their relation to previous or contemporary theories. Psychological and psycho-analytic books in particular require such information since differences of opinion among the leaders in these subjects are of the greatest importance. In all philosophical works the degree of specialization must be stated. The inclusion of case-histories in psycho-analytic works is worth noting.

Books on religion usually necessitate a clear indication of the religion of the author and of the book. The view-point is essential and the type of reader addressed should be stated. Such words as "synoptic," "reservation," "reunion," "Johannine"—familiar as their meaning is to any priest—must be explained.

Sociological works cover many subjects and their requirements vary considerably. Compilations of statistics should be supplied with the actual date of the statistics if that is missing from the title. Books on politics and international affairs require the standpoint of the writer, and perhaps his political standing and period. Economic works must be differentiated

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into grades of specialization, and theories masquerading as principles must be unmasked. Legal text-books often appear after the passing of a new Act of Parliament, and the fact that this Act is covered in the current edition should be noted, as should be their special or general appeal. The inclusion of detailed reports of cases is, of course, invaluable and should be noted. Costume books should be annotated to help dress designers as well as amateur dramatic producers, and the presence of coloured or detailed illustrations should receive attention.

Books on languages need a note showing whether they are historical, comparative, conversational, or direct-method. The degree of knowledge required by a book should be inserted, as well as any additional facts, such as its being used in conjunction with a tutor, broadcasts, or gramophone records. The use of Fraktur or Roman type in German, old or modern type in Russian and Turkish, etc., is of the first importance.

Scientific and technical works should give the degree of knowledge which the reader is expected to have reached and the purpose for which the book has been written. Illustrations and tables should be assessed at their practical worth, American treatment emphasized, and the presence of answers to questions noted.

Books on all phases of art rely on illustrations for much of their effect, and the processes by which they are reproduced—in particular the use of good colour processes—are well worth noting. Music is a large subject in itself, and I must refer you to McColvin and Reeves' recent text-book for further information. American or English standpoint in games should be noted, as well as any peculiarities of professional rules under which the book assumes orthodoxy. The complicated and obscure titles of some bridge and chess books certainly require an explanatory note.

Literary works necessitate notes of the language in which they are written, the period treated, the presence of notes and editorial apparatus, as well as the particular text used. Expurgation is often not mentioned on the title-page, but should be noted in the annotation.

Historical works may possess some special viewpoint or they may relate to some, at first, unidentified period. Special appendices, chronologies and genealogies, and reproductions of rare portraits may sometimes possess the greatest importance. In reprints of the classics it is as well to indicate whether the maps and illustrations of the original edition are present; very often they are not, as is the case in the cheapest editions of Huxley's travel books. Geographical and historical works may be addressed to various

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classes of readers, or may require a certain amount of knowledge; such facts should be clearly indicated.

Encyclopedias and dictionaries whose viewpoint is American or foreign should be distinguished if necessary: good illustrations and bibliographies are worth especial mention, but in these days when a bibliography occurs in every second book, only those lists which have some pretensions to authority should be noted, their degree of selection and period being essential.

I have not been able to avoid repeating much that has already been said in the text-books of Mr. Savage and Mr. Sayers, and perhaps it is unnecessary to add that these two books are still the *last* word on annotation and that no student should attempt to write annotation in the examination unless he has first mastered Sayers' *First stages in annotation*. Remember the six questions which you should ask yourself: who is the author; what is the subject; what is the purpose; what degree of education is required; what special bibliographical features are present; and, finally, what relation does it bear to other books? These, combined with the information from the prospectus, will form your annotation, but the style may be your own.

The County Scene

E. J. CARNELL

"**I**S the county branch library meeting the reading needs of the public in a way that has some constructive value, or is it simply dumping rubbish into an ever-gaping pit? The great problem, as in most larger public libraries, is fiction.

"That the public is an ever-gaping pit the librarian will probably agree; but that he dumps rubbish therein he is scarcely likely to admit. Apart from the supply of non-fiction—this by some magic means is always supposed to act as a stimulant rather than as a narcotic—do the novels he issues add anything of value to the lives of his readers? It is arguable that novels by such writers as Galsworthy, Lawrence, Huxley, Rose Macaulay and Charles Morgan must add something to the lives of people who read them. But what about the red-hot romance and 'They're-tough-mighty-tough-in-the-West' stories for which so many people crave and which inflate the issues at most libraries:—do these bring anything valuable into the lives of readers? Does a G. B. Rodney or an Ethel M. Dell

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develop the 'awareness,' the personality and individuality of the person who borrows it? And if it does not, is it not short-sighted and stupid to supply a book to the public which will probably act only as a drug upon attainment and a brake upon mental curiosity?

"Possibly it is, but we keep on doing it. We cannot help it. And perhaps even such books have a slight value, considered socially. They keep the reader marking time and blunt his or her propensity for running socially amok. They keep him out of mischief in the same way that 'nice' books, presented to young children by maiden aunts, are supposed to keep them out of mischief. Whether librarians should aim to function as maiden aunts of the public is another matter.

"The branch librarian who watches a spate of mediocre fiction pouring in and as promptly pouring out again—with his non-fiction 15 per cent. of total issue being jostled like débris in the torrent—he may well wonder if much of his work is worth the trouble. Can this popular fiction do anything but blur the faculties of his readers? Do we not need a new Karl Marx to rise up and cry out that not religion any longer, but Ethel M. Dell, is opium for the people?

"But the whole question is relative. What may blunt the edge of one person's perception may sharpen the vision of another. A book by Ethel M. Dell may inject sleeping sickness into the veins and draw a dull blanket over the mind of one reader; it may add an aura of warmth and colour, and bring exhilaration and even sharp beauty to the humdrum existence of another. The same applies to 'Western' writers such as Rodney, Robertson, *et al.*

"The fact remains that it is impossible to tell whether a reader borrowing a book by Ethel M. Dell will read it to her benefit or detriment. There ought to be some kind of sensitive apparatus at the entrance wicket to record, when she returns it, whether she has extracted some succulence or delight from it or whether she has simply taken it in like tapioca pudding. It should be possible, when Utopia comes, to find out whether a book has sharpened a reader's appreciation and experience of life, and made her or him more sensitized to respond to life around and to his own thoughts, emotions, intuitions, etc. If we look at a Van Gogh painting of a wicker chair or of his favourite sunflowers, we can never again think these things ordinary: their essence has been revealed. So it should be with a novel; the essence of life should be revealed to us. But judging by the indifference with which many readers plank their books down on the return counter

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it would seem that an experience of this nature is rare, and must necessarily be so, with fiction of this trivial type. Every library assistant must be familiar with the reader who comes in looking tired, who sniffs, mutters ' 'Nuther light novel, please,' and plants both elbows on the counter. (It requires restraint not to slap a six-ounce pocket edition on to his, or usually her, head.) It is almost impossible to help this type to help themselves. And they are lost at the shelves.

"The only thing to do, and a branch librarian and his staff can do this for at least a small section of the library clientele, is to get to know the tastes of readers so well—and not only their tastes, their *capacities*—that the right person and the right book can be introduced when they are in the library at the same time. The service cannot become too personal. Only by some such haphazard method can a really worth-while fiction service be achieved."—(W. J. Plumbe, Billingham Branch, Durham.)

"Some critics of modern public library methods suggest that it is not the responsibility of the library to provide light fiction, but I do not share that view at all. If escapist literature is essential, it is the librarian's opportunity to see that his borrowers are encouraged to read the better class of that type of book. If he does not supply light fiction, the mass of the public will get it elsewhere, and probably of a much poorer standard. Thus, although it is the policy of the Library to provide a selection of fiction which includes a proportion of light fiction, certain standards are adhered to and the books are selected with some care. Briefly, the position is this. The present lack of stability in social and political life makes for general apathy and leads to uncritical reading. It is not within the power of the librarian substantially to alter this, only to try to alleviate it. But what he can do is to look with hope to the next generation."—(E. A. Wells, Litherland Branch, Lancs., *Staff guild bulletin*, April 1939.)

It is a profoundly disturbing and depressing fact that in the third generation of universal education only a minority of the population read voluntarily anything but the most trivial of fiction and snappy of periodicals. The desire to tell and be told a story is innate in almost everybody and its satisfaction is necessary to the development of the imagination. But few who have worked at a lending library counter will maintain that every issue of a work of fiction from a public library provides stimulation for somebody's imagination. We know that in many, many cases what has

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been provided is, as somebody (I think Mr. Pottinger) once put it, "the daily dose of imaginative dope."

The entire public library service is concerned in this problem, but, as county libraries are accused of giving undue prominence to fiction, we may well give special consideration to the problem raised by the existence of bad fiction and the lust of the public for it.

Having read the contributions of Mr. Plumbe and Mr. Wells, will you consider the following points and, if a single thought is stirred up by any of them, write it down and post to County Branch Library, Morecambe and Heysham, Lancs. :

(a) Is Mr. Wells right in attributing the prevalence of uncritical reading to social and political causes? Personally, I doubt whether, were Utopia established next week, the shelves of public libraries would be stripped of all their good but solid books the week after.

(b) Are there not absolute standards of value for fiction, or is it true that "what may blunt the edge of one person's perception may sharpen the vision of another"? (Or, in the phrase of I. Buchan (Notts), "one man's tripe is another man's turkey.")

(c) Do county branch librarians really want to raise the standard of fiction on their shelves or do they press headquarters to purchase yet more rubbish?

(d) Can any supporter of absolute standards of value produce any definition of it as applicable to works of fiction?

(e) If you were library dictator, would you exclude any or all of the following authors from the shelves of publicly supported libraries: Albanesi, Ayres, Charteris, Deeping, O. Douglas, Crofts, Farnol, Pendexter, Riley, F. C. Robertson, Robins, Joan Sutherland, A. S. Swan?

The only expression of opinion to which I shall not give publicity is the hardy falsehood that if we tempt the public in by offering "Sapper," we shall lead them step by step to Woolf.

A county branch library which produces some exceptionally good and effective pieces of stencilled publicity has issued lists of authors of works of fiction grouped under broad headings. The list entitled "Romances" (love stories) contains in one alphabetical order, without annotation or subdivision, such a diversity of talent as is represented by the following names: Albanesi, Arnim, Douglas, Farnol, S. Jameson, Rose Macaulay, A. S. Swan, Dornford Yates. Do you think such a list contributes to a worthwhile fiction service? If not, are you doing anything better?

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Would you advise Rose Macaulay and Storm Jameson to consult their solicitors?

It is a year ago that the topic of isolation, so far as it affects county library assistants, was aired in these pages. A very successful attempt to mitigate that isolation has just been attempted by four counties. During the first week-end in May between sixty and seventy members of the staffs of the Lancashire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, and Nottinghamshire libraries met at a C.H.A. guest-house in the Peak District for a Week-end School. Everybody seems to have enjoyed it, and Mr. Osborne of Derbyshire, who was mainly responsible for the arrangements, is to be congratulated upon the success of this first attempt to bring together assistants in different county libraries.

Our Library

LEYLAND, ERIC. *The Wider public library*. With an introduction by W. C. Berwick Sayers. 1938. Grafton. 7s. 6d.

IN a book of less than two hundred pages Mr. Leyland has attempted to give an account of the many extension activities which libraries practise to-day, and to suggest a scheme which would unite these activities under a responsible officer. The survey of extension work is a list rather than a guide, failing to be of great assistance, since it describes many functions in which a librarian can usually be but an amateur. The formation of the library as a cultural centre, a voluntary parent to which local societies would turn, is a project demanding more attention, and Mr. Leyland, in suggesting that libraries turn themselves into Village Colleges of the Cambridgeshire pattern, is not revolutionary until he recommends the librarian as director of every department. At last we find mentioned a fate which many librarians justifiably dread—that of becoming a liaison officer, responsible to all and for all, but controlling little. Perhaps Mr. Leyland does not realize that the true librarian is interested in administering his library to such an extent that he does not wish to allot still more of his time to functions which can have but a questionable effect on the town's book service. In fact, Mr. Leyland's dread that someone should step in and seize the coveted position before the librarian is astute enough to grasp it for himself seems unwarranted. It is strange that no space is given to any suggestion that all forms of printed publicity—posters, bulletins, and booklists—could more efficiently be produced by some central body, such

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as the Library Association, and that the few co-operative enterprises now in being in English libraries—*Recommended books* and the booklists issued by the County Libraries Section—are not even discussed. The language of the book might well be improved in any future editions, and such unfortunate phrases as the title and “lecture work with juveniles” could be mended or elided.

R. L. W. C.

MUNFORD, W. A. *Three thousand books for a public library: some significant and representative works for basic stock.* Grafton. 7s. 6d.

This idea of a select bibliography of basic stock, which proved abortive as an A.A.L. corporate venture with Mr. Munford as general editor, now comes to fruition as a one-man piece of work. It is difficult to imagine that a panel of contributors could have done better, though that, of course, is no argument against co-operation. Mr. Munford covers himself in his very sensible preface (or should the reviewer refrain from reading prefaces until afterwards?)—he wants it to be a buying list for the smaller libraries, and they won’t go far wrong if they follow it. Its limits are clearly defined, the following classes being omitted: reference books, children’s books, works of prose fiction, musical scores, foreign texts, and the specialized county literature. Arrangement is by simplified Dewey.

“The weighting of the classes has been done to a plan of experienced demand, largely inarticulate, the construction of which preceded selection,” says the preface. One would like to know more of this method of assessing inarticulate demand; does it, for instance, explain the surprisingly low 12 per cent. for literature as against 36 per cent. for the 900’s? And has this proved satisfactory at Dover? The choice of books is admirable, the balance nicely held between standard and modern works (Doughty and Freya Stark on Arabia, for example). The total cost, at say six shillings per volume, is £900. How many libraries spend their first book-grants so wisely as this?

A few literal errors have crept in (spellings of Ginsberg, Westrup, Krougliakoff, Maugham, etc.), and it is so up to date that at least two unpublished books are included (the Essex volume of *Highways and byways* and Vera Brittain’s *Winifred Holtby*). There is a subject but no author index. The format is just adequate, but undistinguished and compares ill with, say, Dagenham’s *Four thousand recommended books*. But these are

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small and ungrateful points in view of the extremely high competence of the book as a whole. It ought to be a boon to many a librarian.

J. H. D.

RANGANATHAN, S. R. *Theory of library catalogue*. Madras Library Association. Edward Goldston. 10s. 6d.

For the practising and student cataloguer this book has one vital section, that dealing with subject entries (pp. 79-174). Here is developed in connexion with the author's Colon Classification a systematic set of rules for the choice of subject headings. As the author plainly states, Cutter and later authorities all compromise so much when dealing with this most difficult of a cataloguer's tasks that the ultimate choice of subject headings remains an essentially personal question. Based on the principle that the classification symbol of a book should be a direct and *certain* guide to this subject heading (here the Colon Classification excels), Ranganathan illustrates a "chain procedure" which gives both heading and certain references for any book.

Generally, the book has critically examined all major features of the dictionary and classified catalogue and quotes copiously here from Mann, Quinn, and Cutter. His application of "The Five Laws of Library Science," the "Law of Parsimony," and six Canons for catalogues remains at this stage the basis for further research work.

W. B. H.

ROBERTS, A. D. *Guide to technical literature: introductory chapters and engineering*. Grafton. 15s.

This is the first of two works covering a portion of the field of technical literature. If it is a foretaste of the one which is to follow, then the sooner the next volume comes the better we shall be pleased.

Pages 1-47 of this first volume consists of chapters devoted to the bibliography and history of technology in general. The final two hundred pages are given to engineering literature, classified, but without call numbers, according to Dewey. The list of books is selective, but in no instance, although a thorough check was made, was anything important found to be missing. My own pet list of technical books, in the City and Guilds of London Institute programme, is not, however, mentioned. The range of subjects is very wide, moving from springs to skywriting, from cargoes to

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of
coal-mining. The book can be recommended to all reference libraries without reserve.

S. H. H.

SMITH, R. D. HILTON. *Public library lighting.* Vol. II. *Artificial Lighting.* Part I. Philip. 7s.

A practical and informative work containing tables and data valuable to the librarian, together with a bibliography and a list of "buildings to see." The price seems fantastic for a book of ninety-six pages, and it is to be hoped that illustrations of the many examples cited will be included in the final volume, to be published in a few months.

W. B. S.

STEEL, MURIEL. *Books you'll enjoy: an annotated guide for readers from twelve to eighteen years.* Foreword by Lt.-Col. Mitchell, C.B.E. Introduction by W. C. Berwick Sayers, F.L.A. Grafton. 5s.

A companionable list of interesting books such as young people will enjoy consulting—big enough to give variety and small enough to read through at one sitting. There are very few of Miss Steel's titles whose ability to interest would be disputed, but Mr. Sayers treads on dangerous ground when he informs the young reader that everything in this list (it includes William books, Angela Brazil, etc.) is well written and worth while. Perhaps his words will not mislead so very many, for few children are going to read a foreword, an introduction, and a preface, which three comprise one-fifth of this book. The first two are doubtless there for the benefit of librarians, who, seeing the revered names of the writers thereof, will immediately order a copy of *Books you'll enjoy*. Nevertheless, the book is intended for children and adolescents, and to these it will give real pleasure and help. Unfortunately the price of 5s. will not permit many to have a copy of their own. Miss Steel's annotations are sound and attractive—with a very few exceptions. For instance, "written with humour, wisdom, tenderness, and a touch of irony" will not attract any twelve- to eighteen-year-old to a book. It is a pity, too, that the exterior of the book follows the tradition of all books published by librarians—sobriety and restraint.

F. M. W.

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The Revision School

K. C. HARRISON

IT was youth's day at Chaucer House on Sunday, 23rd April, 1939. The occasion was that of the first Oral Revision School for Correspondence Course students, sponsored by the Education Committee of the A.A.L. and organized by Mr. D. H. Halliday. Students who were taking or had taken an A.A.L. correspondence course were invited to the school free of charge, while other students were allowed to attend on payment of the very nominal fee of half a crown. This idea had its roots in a "Sunday school" which Mr. Halliday organized for his classification students last November, an effort so successful that it prompted the Committee to sponsor this more ambitious venture of a Revision School for all Elementary and Intermediate students in the London area. There were doubts that, in view of the existence of the correspondence courses and the numerous lecture courses in and around London, such a venture would prove to be superfluous. The response effectively dispelled any such doubts. One hundred and forty-two students attended the Revision School, a number greatly in excess of the wildest expectations of the Committee, as it was in excess of the expectations of Mr. Halliday and the tutors.

When I was asked to report the activities of the School for **THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT** I inaugurated, both during the day and since, a survey among the students on best mass-observation lines. The result was 100 per cent. enthusiasm for the School and a much-expressed hope that the idea would be developed and extended. All the students I conversed with commented on the lines that, although it had been an arduous day, it was an eminently well-spent day, and that their knowledge, and, consequently, their examination prospects, had been improved considerably. My survey also drew forth other and less formal comments, for example, that Mr. Halliday resembled and spoke like Mr. Stuart Hibberd of the B.B.C. But I must not repeat too many remarks of this kind!

The classes commenced at 11.15 a.m. and went on, with short breaks for lunch and tea, until 6.30 p.m. The Elementary class, consisting of fifty-nine students, was so large that it was divided for convenience into two sections. These were addressed by Messrs. F. Barlow, E. V. Corbett, S. H. Horrocks, W. E. Maskell, and W. A. Munford. Cataloguing was covered by R. L. W. Collison, F. McDonald, and H. A. Sharp, while the

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Classification tutors were W. H. Phillips, S. G. Saunders, A. J. Walford, E. Wisker, and the present writer. There was also a combined class consisting of students taking both classification and cataloguing, and for this class the tutors provided repeat lectures. Apart from questions during class, which were welcome at all times, another opportunity for students was given at "Question Time," which occurred from 6 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. Perhaps it was shyness, or perhaps students were already replete enough with information, but "Question Time," in classification at least, did not result in quite the bombardment of questions that was anticipated. In fact, there was a feeling among tutors that, although a certain amount of informality had been achieved, there was insufficient mixing between students and tutors. The importance of intimate treatment of student's personal problems is recognized by all tutors, and it was definitely felt that not enough contact had been made with the students. The reasons for this, however, were obvious. First, the exceedingly heavy programme to be covered, and, secondly, the unexpected size of the attendance. It is to be hoped that, on the occasion of the next Revision School, ample arrangements will be made to further the ideal of direct contact between the individual student and the tutor.

It will be noted that I am taking for granted that there will be another Revision School. Not only one more, for I hope to see the Revision School become a permanent feature in our organization of professional education. It would be disappointing, no ! tragic, if the idea were allowed to rot after such a flourishing beginning. If the Education Committee decides to continue the existence of the Revision School, I can assure its members that students will be genuinely grateful. Another, and more ambitious, idea has been put forward regarding the future of the School. This is that, for the benefit of provincial students, the Revision School should occasionally be held in various parts of the provinces. It is recognized that, although the North and the Midlands are fairly well provided for in the matter of oral tuition, there are many parts of the country where it cannot be obtained. Such tuition is desired by many students ; witness the fact that assistants from such far-flung outposts as Bristol and Portsmouth attended our first Revision School in London. By holding oral classes in the provinces, the Education Committee can help an untold number of students. Let us hope that this idea will be considered and adopted.

The concluding half-hour of the Revision School was marked by a talk

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to a general assembly of students in the Council Chamber by Mr. Halliday, who spoke on "Examination-room technique." His talk was extremely practical, and cannot fail to have given added confidence to many of the students. He thanked students for their attendance, and added that in his opinion no other profession could have organized such a successful effort on the purely voluntary lines that had been adopted in this case. There were rumours, he said, that the A.A.L. was dead, but he had the concrete proof of this successful day that this was not so.

The day would not have been complete if we had had no opportunity of thanking Mr. Halliday for all the hard work he put into the very efficient organization of the School. On behalf of the general assembly, Mr. Welsford of the Library Association expressed to Mr. Halliday the heartiest thanks of all concerned.

Students' Problems : XIX

D. H. HALLIDAY

EDUCATION, *Salaries, and Conditions*.—In their discussion in the March number, Mr. R. E. Richards and Mr. S. H. Horrocks raised the important problem of the economic position of library assistants in relation to education and training. This matter deserves the fullest examination, and the following suggestions from Miss M. S. Moore (North-Western Polytechnic) should provoke much thought :

"The interesting point has been made that the Junior Assistant is in reality serving an unrecognized apprenticeship. I have little doubt that many poorly paid assistants have felt this, and have also felt that they were being exploited.

"The suggested examination of salaries seems to me a very good way of bringing the matter into greater prominence, but I believe that the examination should be taken a step farther. It is most probable that the library authorities who pay the poorest salaries also offer the worst working conditions and show most of the cases of understaffing ; and an examination of salaries and prospects would not be complete without some reference to the hours worked and a rough estimate of the amount of work which the assistant was supposed to do. An assistant in a big well-organized library system, on a fairly reasonable salary scale, may well be serving an apprenticeship ; but those in small understaffed libraries, working spells of

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three and even four hours alone in the lending library, with queues frequently on both sides of the counter, and a routine job of overdues or reserved books which is supposed to be done at the same time, are not serving apprenticeships. There is another name for it. At the end of a day they are far too tired to study, and during the day they have learnt only how to scuffle through a job in the minimum amount of time possible, and have probably much to unlearn for examination purposes.

"I believe that apprenticeship, if free from abuses, is not a bad thing; and I do not believe that there is any immediate likelihood of library authorities making revolutionary changes in their salary scales. A gradual improvement should, of course, always be encouraged, but progress will be slow so long as the profession holds out the two inducements of the fascination of books and the security of a pensionable job, so ensuring an ample flow of recruits.

"I would suggest, then, that we make a survey of salaries and conditions, and working on the data obtained, the Library Association should draw up a report acknowledging the apprenticeship status of all assistants who have not passed the elementary examination, and should recommend a minimum salary which is always to be supplemented by the granting of a specific number of hours of working time each week for study purposes. While a similar series of recommendations might be made for assistants studying for the Intermediate examination, for the large body of people who do not enter for, or do not pass, this examination, a non-professional status should be recognized either at a specific age or when a certain salary is reached. Their salary scale should be different from that of Associates or Fellows, but, in recognition of the fact that librarianship may be just as much a lifetime job to the unqualified as the qualified, an adequate maximum should ultimately be attainable. The relationship between the salaries of apprentices and non-professional staff in the early stages—particularly in the case of assistants studying for the Intermediate examination and their contemporaries in the non-professional grade—would need careful consideration. Possibly reference to foreign, and particularly American, practice might be of assistance on this point. Assistants passing the Intermediate examination would, as now, be eligible for election to the register of qualified librarians and, while being qualified for many positions, would need to gain their Fellowship before the chief positions were open to them.

"While agreeing with Mr. Horrocks that the passing of either the Intermediate or the Final examination is not the 'open sesame' to a living

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wage, I would suggest that it is practically impossible to obtain one without passing them. Hence the idea of study periods would have two advantages; first, it would compensate for unduly small salaries; and, secondly, as students would have great opportunities for study, changes in the syllabus would not create so much controversy; the difficulty and hence the standard of the Final examination could be increased, the status of librarianship would be improved—and then better salaries should follow!"

Assistants interested in these suggestions, or any other aspect of salaries and conditions, should familiarize themselves with what has already been done by way of investigation and recommendation. The two most relevant documents are the *Report on the hours, salaries, and conditions of service in British municipal libraries, 1931*, which was prepared for the A.L. under the editorship of Mr. F. Seymour Smith, and the Library Association's *Recommendations of the council on salaries and conditions of service, June, 1934*, which is based largely on the scales recommended by the National Association of Local Government Officers.

Revision School: Comments Wanted.—An account of the Revision School held at Chaucer House on 23rd April will appear elsewhere in this number. As an experiment, it seemed to be a great success; but if the Committee are to develop the idea and accede to the many requests to make it a regular feature they will want to profit by the experience of all who took part. It would be most helpful, then, if students who have any suggestions to offer would communicate them to Mr. S. W. Martin or to me, in order that they might be passed on to the Education Committee.

Also, provincial students who feel that there is need for the establishment of a Revision School on similar lines in their area, would do well to place their ideas before their divisional committee.

The May Examinations.—The usual comments on the Elementary and Intermediate examinations will appear in the July number. If candidates for any part of the Final examination would let me have particulars of any unusual difficulty they have encountered, it might be possible to arrange for explanations of such points.

The Library Assistant

Correspondence

MANOR PARK LIBRARY, E.12.

SIR,

Mr. Collison's article in the April ASSISTANT was very interesting. There are certain points that need further emphasis.

(a) In some libraries book jackets are displayed. Readers are interested but are irritably annoyed to find very very few actual books on the shelves.

(b) Many fiction readers come in for a type of novel. They easily forget author's names. The usual alphabetical author arrangement does not help them easily to satisfy their needs.

(c) Readers are depressed to see rows and rows of books on the shelves, which rarely go out and seem to have outlived their usefulness.

(d) Readers see counter assistants busy, and so do not ask an assistant to help them.

(e) In many areas readers half a mile or so from the library borrow at infrequent intervals because it is too much trouble to make the journey.

(f) Many assistants act as if they are book-receiving and book-issuing machines instead of trying to satisfy each reader's individual needs.

Each library service must solve these problems. It would be interesting to know how they have been solved.

Yours sincerely, ERIC M. WRIGHT.

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